



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Chanchal Chowdhury opens up about 'Taqdeer', upcoming films

SHAH ALAM SHAZI

National Film Award-winning actor Chanchal Chowdhury started out as a theatre actor, before establishing a rightful place for himself in television and films. He has earned acclaim for his powerful performances on the silver screen throughout the years. The versatile actor will soon be seen in *Taqdeer*, a web series on Hoichoi. He talks about the state of web-based projects in Bangladesh, his upcoming ventures and more in a candid conversation with *The Daily Star*.

You are leading actor in 'Taqdeer', created by Syed Ahmed Shaawi and Saleh Sobhan Auneem, for Hoichoi. What drew you to this project? *Taqdeer* has a gripping and powerful story. We shot the series at different locations in Manikganj, Munshiganj and Mawa, among other spots. I play a hearse driver on the show. The creators planned and treated everything like a film. A lot of time and dedication went into the series, and it is very different from anything that I have done so far.

What was it like to shoot, maintaining all health guidelines?

We took all possible precautions – all members of the unit wore masks on the sets. But frankly speaking, it was extremely challenging to follow social distancing guidelines while shooting a scene.

What do you think sets 'Taqdeer' apart from other web shows out there from Bangladesh?

I think that most of our web shows lag behind in quality. As artistes, we have a responsibility to provide new and interesting stories to the audience. I only work on projects that match my taste and sensibilities. *Taqdeer's* fresh story sets it apart from other shows on the web.

Where do you think our industry stands, when it comes to web content? We have yet to make a significant mark on web platforms, but we definitely have a lot of potential. Budget and lack of audience interest are some of our major hurdles. Nonetheless, I hope that *Taqdeer* will bring about positive changes for us.

You, along with a few Bangladeshi actors, were expected to be a part of Srijit Mukherji's web series for Hoichoi, based on Bangladeshi writer Mohammad Nazim Uddin's acclaimed thriller, 'Rabindranath Ekhan Kohono Khete Ashen Ni'. Unfortunately, the director recently revealed on social media that he will be working on the series with Indian artistes only, due to the pandemic. Would you like to say anything about that? Srijit Mukherji emailed me about the series. However, we did not finalise anything officially, and we didn't have any talks about it after that. The pandemic has interrupted everyone's plans, and I am sure that there is a valid reason behind his decision.

What can you tell us about your upcoming films?

Gias Uddin Selim's *Paap Punno* and Mejbaur Rahman Sumon's *Hawa* are two of my upcoming films. The dubbing for *Paap Punno* is completed, and *Hawa* is also near the end of production. The release dates of these films are yet to be announced.

Translated by Rasheek Tabassum Mondira

The many inspirations of artist Shahid Kabir

ALI ADIL KHAN

Acclaimed artist Shahid Kabir left for Spain in 1980, after attaining fame in Bangladesh for his series on the mystic Lalon Shah and being deprived of a well-deserved Japanese scholarship for a master's degree in art. I recently found and acquired a set of eight exquisitely embossed aquatint etchings by Kabir made in Spain in the mid 1980's, which intrigued me to research and discuss the inspirations behind them with the artist himself and his long-time art dealer and friend Peter De Munnich from Profile Art Gallery in Canada.

Kabir chose Spain as a fertile ground for further learning and honing his artistic talents. Spain has a long and rich history of producing some of the greatest renaissance, baroque, impressionist, modern and contemporary artists of the world.

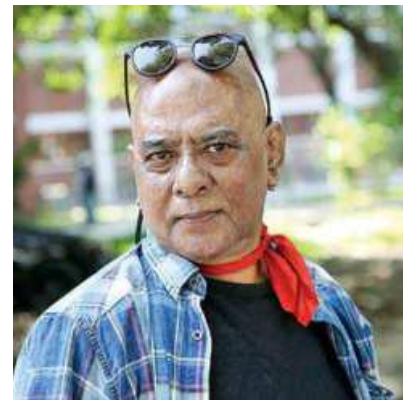
Kabir immersed himself fully into the Spanish culture and way of life, observing and experiencing the art world of the 1980s. He received guidance and support from Monirul Islam, a fellow senior artist from Bangladesh who came to Madrid in 1969, and settled down.

Kabir adopted Spain as his new home and initially struggled to find his footing, but never looked back. He integrated at a fast pace with the locals, learned to speak fluent Spanish and cook gourmet Spanish food. Within a short span of time, he established himself as one of the leading printmakers in Madrid. His artistic expressions are ingrained in surrealistic and abstract impressionism.

In 1980, the same year that he arrived in Madrid, Kabir joined the Galleria Estampa as an assistant printmaker. He learned the difficult



'Mi Reino 11' (1985)



Shahid Kabir

process of creating embossed aquatint etchings on paper. Meticulous as he was in his painting, he quickly gained the trust of the director of the print studio, who assigned him to print limited editions of portfolios for well-known Spanish and French artists. He also experimented and produced miniature size prints of his own with varying subjects from still life to self-portraits.

Wine and I (1980) and *Still Life* (1980) are great examples of his early etchings, where attention to detail

and treatment of space to create a third dimension are clearly present that speak to the creative genius of Kabir.

Soon after mastering the art of embossing aquatint etchings, Kabir started creating his own works, and by 1985, he was producing large sized multi-colour prints. Humans, friends and neighbours, living spaces, objects and experiences merge and serve as points of reference for the artist. For example, in his *Mi Reino* (My Kingdom, 1985) series, Kabir draws and paints what he sees around him – Senora Maria, his friend and neighbour, a couple kissing in the neighbouring house as seen from the window of his house and his surroundings, his kitchen, dining room and living room.

The same year, Kabir produced a series of etchings, titled *Musica y Vida* (Music & Life, 1985), which was a tribute to life and music. He brilliantly composes the etchings, as if creating a melody, with geometric figures, objects of love, desire and nature. Kabir's deep love for music, be it Bengali Baul music or songs of Lalon Shah, the mystic poet and

philosopher from the 18th century, is evident in his work. In Spain, he was introduced to the traditional Spanish Flamenco music and dance, which has its roots in South Asia. It is believed that the Roma peoples, who migrated from Rajasthan to Spain between the 9th and 14th centuries, brought with them musical instruments, such as tambourines, bells, and wooden castanets, and an extensive repertoire of songs and dances. Kabir is also fond of Reggae music and the Blues, and in particular, loves the sounds of the electric guitar and the saxophone.

His *Circo* (Circus, 1987) series is a vivid depiction of his experience of enjoying a circus by himself, and also later, with his daughter Biba in Madrid. In this etching, Kabir playfully brings out the entertainers and performers, whether they are animals or human beings, showing their mastery in acrobatics, juggling, trapeze, taming or clowning.

Kabir's prints of the 1990s show great finesse and celebrate a bohemian lifestyle. During this period, Kabir was prolific and popular, as he exhibited his works

widely across Europe and North America. Nature played a significant role in his evocative *Feuilles n Fleurs* (Leaves and Flowers, 1997) series.

Peter De Munnich recollected that he had quite a few etchings by Kabir and his fellow printers from Madrid. "The print studio Galleria Estampa in Madrid was fairly unique in producing a large number of etching, aquatint and carborundum editions throughout the 1980s and 1990s. It is through this studio that I first got to meet Kabir and made a trip to Madrid to visit him in the early 1990s," he said. "The prints produced at the studio were all of very fine quality and I really enjoyed working with them. It's sad that the market for hand-pulled prints has been diminished over in the last 20 years, as digital printing took over the market to a large degree." I feel lucky to have some of Kabir's best works in my collection. He is an authentic artist, and a compassionate human being.

Ali Adil Khan is the founder and director of SAGA Foundation and South Asian Gallery of Art (SAGA) in Toronto, Canada.

FROM PAGES TO SCREEN

Adaptations to enjoy on Netflix

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

As our schedules are getting more and more hectic whilst working from home and attending online classes, a good way to relax is to binge-watch some films and shows on Netflix. Even if you have not picked up any books recently, you will enjoy watching these adaptations on the streaming platform.

ALL THE BRIGHT PLACES (2020)

Based on the internationally bestselling novel of the same name by Jennifer Niven, the story revolves around teens Violet Markey (Elle Fanning) and Theodore Finch (Justice Smith), who are facing personal struggles. After being assigned to research the hidden wonders of Indiana, the protagonists unexpectedly form a powerful bond. Featuring a diverse cast of characters, this is a good watch over the weekend.

ROOM (2015)

This film adaptation of Irish-Canadian author Emma Donoghue's novel, *Room*, is a brilliant thriller. After being kidnapped by a psychopath, a young woman (Brie Larson) is



All the Bright Places



The Little Prince

held captive in a small shed, along with her son (Jacob Tremblay). This intense story leaves an impact, and rightly addresses the rise in violence and crimes against women.

THE BABY-SITTERS CLUB (2020)

This series of novels written by



Room

Ann M. Martin gained immense popularity among young readers between 1986 and 2000. The stories revolve around a group of friends, navigating their everyday problems. Claudia, Kristy, Stacey and Mary decide to start a baby-sitting business to look after the

kids in their neighbourhood. The characters are lively and their storylines incorporate their family dynamics, friendships and relationships. The show perfectly blends nostalgia with modernity.

THE LITTLE PRINCE (2015)

3D animated film *The Little Prince* reintroduces audiences to the classic written by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. The film narrates the story of an aviator who comes across a boy from outer space. As he recalls his explorations with his young neighbour, she starts connecting with the story and is set to find the lost prince, with the help of his fox.

THE WILLOUGHBYS (2020)

Based on the book of the same name by Lois Lowry, the animated film portrays the lives of four siblings who are set to unravel new adventures with their nanny. The storyline is humorous and trailed through how the characters solve their own issues, after sending their parents for a dangerous vacation. The light-hearted film beautifully depicts the dynamics of the family.



The Willoughbys



The Baby-Sitters Club



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

'Arekta' Rock interview

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

We caught up with Arekta Rock Band, one of Dhaka's rising young bands, after the much anticipated release of their latest single, *Arekta Rock Gaan*.

Congratulations on the new release. How difficult is maintaining a band during a pandemic?

ARB: The quarantine started off as a much needed break from our hectic routine, and the first month was actually quite relaxing for us. Things eventually got worse, and our productivity hit a slump. The shutdown has put a halt on our momentum that we had been building up for almost a year prior. However, we are glad that we've managed to pull through and finally release *Arekta Rock Gaan*.

How did you come up with the concept of a video game inspired music video?

ARB: All of our music videos, including this one, are directed and produced by Shahariar Ahamed (Cybertron Studios). We actually had a completely different idea planned for the video, but the execution wasn't feasible as the lockdown

had restricted our flexibility. The entire credit goes to Shahariar, as came up with the entire theme.

Do you miss performing in live shows? How are you keeping in touch with your audience?

ARB: Words cannot describe how much we miss the adrenaline of live gigs. Arekta Rock Band thrives on live shows, because of how well we can connect with our audience through it. Since the 'new normal' does not allow such luxuries anymore, we are keeping in touch with our audience via our social media channels.

What is the most important quality that a rock band needs to have in this era?

ARB: You need to be prepared for anything – we learned that the hard way this year. Make the most out of every good moment, and do not give up on your efforts no matter what. They will eventually pay off, when the time is right.

What's next for Arekta Rock Band?

ARB: We can promise you one thing – a lot of new music!